Could Sasquatch Be a Physical Therapist?

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I suspect that most readers of this editorial have spent enjoyable afternoons sauntering through a museum. In my home state of Maine, I have enjoyed the breathtaking intricacy of Andrew Wyeth's paintings in the collections of the Farnsworth Museum in Rockland. I have marveled at the examples of Fresnel lenses that have provided the safe passage of ships that are included in the Lighthouse museum in Rockland. I always look forward to the ever-changing exhibits at the Portland Art Museum, and this past summer I appreciated the display of work by William Wegman and his Weimaraner dogs at the Bowdoin College Museum of Art. Indeed, I purchased a copy of a film he made starring his dogs that he refers to as "The Hardly Boys." It is called "Hardly Gold" and it is perhaps best appreciated with a glass or two of wine. Until recently, I had never heard of the International Cryptozoology Museum, which is located on a side street in Portland. In fact, I had never heard the term "Cryptozoology." Jill M. Church provides the following definition and commentary of the discipline. "Cryptozoology is the study of animals that are hypothesized to exist, but concrete physical evidence to prove their existence has not yet been found. … Stories, legends, and local folklore attract cryptozoologists, who then expend most of their energy trying to establish the existence of a creature."[1,p251] Examples of the creatures that are studied by cryptozoologists include Bigfoot (ie, Sasquatch), Yeti (ie, the Abominable Snowman), and the Loch Ness Monster. There have apparently been sightings of a bigfoot creature in Maine.[2] Church continued by stating, "Cryptozoology has acquired a bad reputation as a pseudoscience. … Until detailed, methodical research becomes standard practice among cryptozoologists, the field will remain disrespected by more traditional biologists and zoologists."[1,p252]

So, seeking indoor entertainment on a winter day, I traveled to Portland to visit the museum. A statement made by Gee in an editorial published in the online journal *Nature* was typewritten and placed in a display case:

"The discovery that Homo Floresiensis survived until so very recently, in geological terms, make it more likely that stories of other mythical, human-like creatures such as Yetis are founded on grains of truth."[3] When I returned home, I sought information about Homo Floresiensis and found that in 2003 a discovery was made at the Liang Bua cave on the Indonesian Island of Flores. Some have proposed that this is a completely new species that is different from Homo Sapiens and some believe that this is just a species of Homo Sapiens with pathologies of anatomy and physiology.[4,5] Of course, I focused on the proposal that I should consider believing in other creatures based on "grains of truth." Observation of the contents of the museum reveals that the reason cryptozoology is referred to as a pseudoscience is that much of it relies on anecdotal evidence.

One "creature" that is on display at the museum is a model of the FeeJee Mermaid. This one has an interesting history. P. T. Barnum actually leased the mermaid from a man who had apparently purchased it from a seaman. Barnum wanted to place it on display in the American Museum. Before displaying the creature, Barnum did seek the judgment of a naturalist regarding the authenticity of the mermaid. The naturalist informed Barnum that it was fake—the body of a monkey sewn into the tail of a fish. According to the Museum of Hoaxes, "Barnum realized that it wasn't important whether or not the mermaid was real. All that was important was that the public be led to believe that it might

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

DOI: 10.1097/JWH.0b013e31828c51d9

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be real. So he hired a phony naturalist (Dr. Griffin) to vouch for the creature's authenticity, placed pictures of bare-breasted mermaids in the newspapers, and thereby manipulated the public into wanting to see it."[6]

I was calmed by a typewritten statement in the museum that cryptologists do seek more than "grains of truth." Indeed, when available, apparent evidence is tested with valid and reliable research methods. The statement that decreased my blood pressure was: "Cryptozoologists are open-minded skeptics and critical thinkers. One percent (1%) of the evidence is due to hoaxing. But, upwards of 80% of the data is due to misidentification coming from known species such as the 'Sasquatch hair' that turned out to be from a buffalo rug."[7] DNA testing also revealed that another swatch of hair that was claimed to have come from a Sasquatch from the Yukon was found to be from a bison. What was thought to be was abandoned when it was found, with gold standard examination, not to be true.

On my trip home from the museum, I thought of several ways that my entertainment for the day was applicable to what might be found in a future Physical Therapy Museum. Following were my thoughts:

- Although techniques used by physical therapists were not guided by research evidence early on, physical therapists became committed to using only techniques that were tested by well-designed research.
- Physical therapists did at one time use interventions that were based on anecdotal evidence. However, that practice was replaced by the use of interventions that were based on proven principles of physiology and physics and verified with rigorous research.
- When a technique was found not to be better than placebo, it was abandoned.
- Individuals and organizations that made positive claims about untested techniques and suggested that they should be used on real patients or, by some fluke, were allowed to teach these untested techniques were immediately ostracized.
- Those designated as leaders of physical therapists were bold and courageous mentors and role models of their discipline as evidenced by their teaching new entrants to the profession how to discriminate and use only methods that were authenticated with high-quality research. They also publically stated which techniques should not be believed or practiced.
- At physical therapists' gatherings, or conferences, techniques that were not tested by well-designed research were not allowed to be presented.
- People with big feet were allowed to be physical therapists. (OK… this one is a joke—I couldn't resist. However, this is based on a "grain of truth.")

This issue of the journal includes research that would be allowed to be presented at the type of museum previously outlined.

Dr Heather Bush and her colleagues investigated the relationship between chronic back pain and stress urinary incontinence. Dr Tremback-Ball and colleagues examined young women's understanding about what can be done for those who experience urinary incontinence. Dr Andringa and her coauthors investigated types of symptoms and the influence they have on activity levels during pregnancy. Dr Mbada and her coauthors report on musculoskeletal pain with breastfeeding positions.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the following individuals who are the equivalent of museum curators as evidenced by their commitment to ensuring that what is published is believable, reliable, and authentic.

Dr Diane Borello-France, senior editor. I want each reader to understand that this woman deserves adulation for her commitment to increasing the quality of research that is published in this journal. The hours she spends on this endeavor are many and we all are the beneficiaries of her hard work.

Dr Karen Abraham, Dr Elaine Wilder, and Darija Scepanovic are associate editors and are advisors who guide me as I seek the goal of this journal being MEDLINE indexed in the PubMed database. I thank them for their wise advice.

The following are individuals who donate valuable volunteer time to review submitted manuscripts to ensure that we publish the highest quality research that is meaningful for the membership. I thank them for their dedication.

- Karen Abraham, PT, PhD, WCS.
- Jill Boissonnault, PT, PhD, WCS
- Diane Borello-France, PT, PhD.
- Darla Cathart, PT, DPT, WCS, CLT
- Cynthia Chiarello, PT, PhD
- Susan Clinton, PT, MHS, OCS, WCS
- Pamela Downey, MSPT, DPT, WCS, BCB-PMD
- Patricia Downey, PT, PhD, DPT, OCS
- Ann Dunbar, PT, MS, DPT
- Donna Edwards, PT, OCS
- Paula Click Fenter, PT, DHSc, MHS, GCS
- Carol Figuers, PhD, EdD
- Ann Marie Flores, PT, MS, MA, PhD, CLT-LANA
- Nicole Gergich, MPT, CLT-LANA
- Hollis Herman, DPT, PT, OCS, BCB-PMD

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- Gerard Hesch, PT, MHS
- Mary Kathleen Kearse, PT, CLT-LANA
- Adrienne McAuley, PT, DPT, Med, OCS, FAAOMT
- Katy Mitchell, MSPT, PhD
- Cindy Neville, PT, DPT
- Darija Scepanovic, MSc, PT
- Karen Snowden, PT, DPT, WCS
- Elaine Wilder, PhD, PT.
- Wenting Wu, PhD

Nancy C. Donovan, PT, PhD
Editor-in-Chief

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